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OUR AFRICAN FIELD

EPISCOPAL
SUPERVISION and ADMINISTRATION
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BY

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WHAT about Africa as related to the world-wide readjustments of the Methodist Episcopal Church? Our African Field has its problems not altogether dissimilar to those in the Home Field. Indeed there enters into these problems, as they are related to the whole, much that should demand the deepest thought and concern of our world-girdling Methodism. First of all, the problem of Episcopal supervision and administration in this and other foreign fields is one that must be squarely met and considered by the Church in the new alignments under the terms of Organic Union.

It should be borne in mind that our Missionary Episcopacy had its birth upon the Continent of Africa, within the territorial boundary of the Republic of Liberia; this was upon the ground of expediency, to meet what was considered an emergency arising from the condition that surrounded our membership on the African Continent, thus giving to that black membership an Episcopal supervision, limited in its character and circumscribed in its functions. The whole purpose at the time, was the building of the Liberian Mission among the black population that had emigrated from the United States of America to the West Coast of Africa. The inauguration of such a policy caused the work upon the African Continent to be disconnected in regular episcopal supervision, practically for the first fifty years of its history, and it is an historic fact that from 1833 to 1916, covering a period of 83 years, only four General Superintendents of the Methodist Episcopal Church have visited and supervised the work in our Liberian Field.

When considered in the light of its possibilities to meet great world-wide emergencies in our ecclesiastical polity, every student of Methodist history must reach the conclusion that our Missionary Episcopacy, despite the intrinsic worth of the worthy men who have been elected to this office, this form of episcopacy has been inadequate to the task of carrying forward the mighty

movements in the execution of the world-program of Methodism. Such must rightly be attributed to its limitations. But out of this restricted episcopacy, the Church soon discovered the necessity of extending her borders and the standard of the Cross was soon borne into India, Japan, China, Korea, Malaysia, Europe, South America and Mexico. Such a movement of Methodism made it difficult to meet the demands of the times under such a policy as thus obtained under our Missionary Episcopacy.

It is now indeed very apparent that the real tendency of Methodism today is towards the unity and solidarity of our Episcopacy upon the broad basis of general itinerant leadership and superintendency for our world fields, rather than the segregation of this episcopal leadership, tied and handicapped among disintegral racial clan and classes. This is evidenced in the appointment of General Superintendents by the General Conference, to episcopal residences and supervision in our foreign fields. Such is a demonstration of the fact that the Missionary Episcopacy, as such, has served its day, and Methodism is now reversing her policy for a broader and better utility of our Episcopacy. This establishes the fact that a broad, deeply spiritual and highly cultured leadership is an absolute necessity for the successful propagation of the gospel by means of Methodism, among the conglomerate population of the world. The whole trend is for the adoption of that sane and sober episcopal policy that will unite the heterogeneous masses into an homogeneous unit. In the light of such great world-movements it becomes evident that the Church must ever maintain that high standard of episcopal leadership that can direct the world-conquests now going forward among the multiplied millions of heathen and pagan peoples; the situation will be disastrous should this standard be prostituted to the whims and sentiments of peculiar racial idiosynacracries and measured by momentary expediencies in our ecclesiastical polity.

The whole question at issue in Africa,—outside of Liberia,—relates to the racial adjustment of the Europeans in their relation to the Native Tribes over which these Europeans now hold protectorates in the governmental affairs of the Continent; this has been the situation from 1885, when Africa was partitioned among the Great Powers, until the present time. Here then, the race issue assumes another phase, differing from that presented in other sections of the world. This requires that the Church, in her missionary operations, should adopt a broad policy respecting this Native Membership, that is to say, they should be brought into our communion upon one common level of universal brotherhood, discarding all attempts at racial segregation. Such a situation presents a most crucial point of contact between Europe and Africa, at which there will be required the most far-seeing Episcopal leadership to meet wisely the various governmental requirements touching foreign missions under Protectorates and Crown Colonies. The work of the church will be in the present century, to mould a great European Commercialism and Industrialism into the spiritual redemption and Christian Civilization of Africa.

This becomes very apparent, when we consider the fact that just prior to the outbreak of the present European War, the various European nations hold possesions in Africa upon the following basis: Great Britain 2,-132,840 square miles of territory with 40,000,000 native population; France 4,300,000 square miles with 36,000,000 native population; Germany 930,000 square miles with 15,000,000 native population; Belgium 800,000 square miles with 15,000,000 native population; Italy 591,000 square miles with 1,750,000 native population; Portugal 800,000 square miles with 9,000,000 native population; Spain 86,000 square miles with 250,000 native population. Making a grand total area of 9,639,840 square miles of territory with a native population of 117,000,000 under the flags of the above mentioned European nations. Ex-

cluding Abysinia and Liberia, the approximate land area of the mighty continent remaining may be estimated at 2,000,000 square miles in the untouched and unexplored regions of Africa, upon which roam still 100,000,000 pagan and savage tribes.

Thus it may be seen that this is no play-day nor dress parade in the missionary operations of the Church under these world-forces. New forces will increase and operate within the coming years, upon the African Continent, when the Nations of Europe shall settle the issues of the present European War. Mighty shiftings of territory and wonderful changes in the map of Africa will be brought about by these final readjustments among the nations, which will throw the entire Continent into the most significant and farreaching transition period amidst great world transformations in the history of the darker backward races. We shall need therefore in Africa, an Episcopal leadership that can compass the whole situation and stand as a mighty factor in the solution of the complex and intricate problems with which the Nations will be confronted in the growth and expansion of nationalities and the permanent establishment of the Christian Church.

This Episcopal leadership will come upon the scene at a time when the nations of the earth as above indicated, are at work in bringing about the complete material and industrial development of the teeming millions of black populations upon their own native heath. Under this mighty ERA, God has been pleased to set apart great agencies through the dominant Anglo-Saxon for the prosecution of this wonderful task. Vast systems of steam navigation, railway construction and industrial expansion are now in operation upon a grand scale; mining corporations are exhuming the wealth of the Continent that has been hidden for centuries; millions of European wealth now flow into these material agencies; the output of African products stands as a commercial connecting link between Europe and the Land of Ham;

wonderful cable connections with wireless telegraphy, tie the Old Continent to the civilized nations of the world.

In view of the grand scale upon which the captains of industry are working out the material destiny of the land, it behooves the Church to keep step with these great world-movements which make for the redemption of Africa. In the midst of the mad rush for territorial expansion on part of European Powers in Africa, it takes a master hand to grasp the ecclesiastical situation and combine the counter forces between industrial expansion and the formation of African states on the one hand, and the missionary propaganda of Protestant Christianity on the other. Methodism should therefore remain unalterably committed to the fundamental principle which underlies our Iteinerant General Superintendency, adhering strictly to the THIRD RESTRICTIVE RULE of our BOOK OF DISCIPLINE, stripped of all compromises or expediencies, completely abolishing the Missionary Episcopacy, thereby raising the standard and functions of our Episcopacy in Africa and all other foreign fields to its time honored position in our ecclesiastical polity. Such is absolutely necessary for the harnessing of our missionary forces under a commanding Episcopal leadership. This brings us to the positive conclusion that our African Field as a whole, needs the supervision and administration of the Itinerant General Superintendency of the Church, over our entire communion including every part of the territory.

Let us consider another important phase of the work related to our membership upon this foreign field. Our African Field presents the most anomalous situation among the foreign mission fields of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Apart from our aboriginal population, the influx of Europeans, as already noted, places the Church in the midst of dual forces in the growth of our membership. These commercial travelers and traders must find Church life and communion in Christian com-

munities under the ample folds of our Methodism with its world-program. Here arises another problem of racial adjustment in the Church, which problem is now in its infancy and can find easy solution by the adoption of that world-wide policy as characterizes Methodism. The mission of Methodism in Africa, is primarily to the millions of uncivilized native population, and as such, it should never become the policy of the Methodist Episcopal Church to organize a distinctively separate European communion in Africa, among a people already blessed with centuries of civilization and who hold connection with their home Church. Such a people indeed should be missionaries among the native populations over whom they hold governmental protectorates, and not the objects of foreign missionary endeavor on part of any great religious denomination. A purely English, French or Portuguese propaganda in the future growth of our Methodism in Africa, will be fostered at the expense of the Native tribes, and in its final analysis, will bring about the same tremendous racial problem upon the very habitat of the African as that which now taxes the time and patience and deepest concern of American Methodism in its struggles for Organic Union. While it is true that Europe is in Africa, yet our supreme work as a foreign missionary agency through the Church, should be the redemption and civilization of the Native inhabitants in this land of darkness.

What then should be the ecclesiastical policy of Methodism to meet such an emergency? A wise policy is that of Wesleyan Methodism in the Gold Coast Colony. The Rev. Mr. Griffin, the Superintendent of Missions for the Wesleyan Church in this Colony under British rule, is carrying forward a most marvelous work there in building a Native Church and membership throughout the Colony. The purpose is the reaching of the Native tribes under this English protectorate, and to this end the forces are thoroughly organized for the development and training of a Native Ministry through unstinted

appropriations from Wesleyan Methodism, not as mere sentimental pity for the black peoples, but as a fundamental principle for the growth and expansion of the Wesleyan Church in Africa. Such a policy does not preclude the organization of white European communions as a self-supporting independent asset should any number of these European dwellers in the tropical belt so elect; but the point at issue is, these alien peoples, holding allegiance to the flags of the various European Governments now possessing the dominant power over African territory and primitive peoples, should not form the basis for the missionary operations of Foreign Mission Boards in the segration and exclusion of the Native populations, the real CAUSE of which our foreign missionary activity is the EFFECT. This is the situation that faces Methodism in every part of Africa, outside of Liberia; hence the necessity for the Church to adopt a policy to obviate the danger of having an African Race Problem in the missionary operations and administration of the work in our African Field.

In order to meet the emergencies arising from the foregoing conditions, the Church should elect three General Superintendents for our African Field, without any modifications in the episcopal functions of that office, not as an EPISCOPAL OPPORTUNISM on part of over-ambitious officialism, but men peculiarly adapted to the whole situation; men who will be required to take up Episcopal residences upon the Continent with their families, the same as the representatives of foreign governments, backed by the full force and confidence of the Church, holding headquarters in East Central, West Central Africa and Liberia. Under this co-ordinate episcopal leadership, the campaign for the entire field could be outlined and planned upon the broad basis of a world-wide Church with no limitations in the functions of that Episcopacy, no segregation among the communicants of Methodism in Africa, all striving for the moral, industrial, intellectual, and spiritual redemption of the Afri-

can Continent, planting the lofty standard of Methodism under the flags of various nations now holding dominion over these black millions. These Church representatives can then study the problems of Africa with men and measures in the large, thus creating new and unlimited possibilities for our missionary operations throughout the Continent regardless of race or color, thereby calling forth renewed and redoubled agencies from the Church at Home and redeeming the Dark Land from the modern curse of Race Prejudice which now blights and blasts the highest civilizations upon the globe.

Under such a system and polity, our Liberian, East African, West African, North African and Congo Missions upon this Continent could have a constant growth and expansion, and a new day would dawn with increased appropriations and mission workers for the field; the Church would thus define her policy respecting the membership and the entire field, and that policy could be strictly adherred to by a leadership unhampered in its strides for the extension of our missionary operations, freed from the handicaps and restrictions that thwarted the efforts of our Missionary Episcopacy.

Furthermore, such a policy in Africa would afford ample opportunity for the election of a Negro General Superintendent, not upon the ground of expediency, as in the case of the Missionary Episcopacy, but upon the broad basis of racial representation and ratio of our black membership to that of the entire membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church. If the flood tide of race prejudice is at its full upon the North American Continent and precludes such a step on part of the Church in the Western World, due to the social and economic conditions that surround its peoples, this tide is at its ebb upon the African Continent, and presents the psychological moment for the Church to shape the eccelsiastical destiny of her colored membership, not upon the basis of racial segregation for which that membership madly contends in America, but rather upon

Brotherhood and Christian Manhood. This is the advocacy of that broad principle which will save both the Church and the Negro at a most delicate point in our racial relation to Methodism. Such a measure would place the entire race problem in the Church at another angle of our ecclesiastical compass, and thus enable Methodism to test the black man's fitness for our itinerant general superintendency, and find common grounds upon which to stand at the sacrifice of no principle whatever on part of the Negro as an organic part of the Church.

In the further consideration of the African Field, the adoption of such a policy as herein before outlined, would work for the larger good of our Liberian Methodism as a component part of the Church in its relation to the adjustments that are inevitable among the black peoples of Africa. When considered in the light of the wonderful forces as heretofore indicated, Liberia occupies the unique position as a gateway for missionary aggressiveness, opening up a pathway to the great tribes of the interior. God holds in reserve this remnant of a population whose forebears were the standard bearers of those lofty ideals of self government, bequeathing to their posterity the only black Republic upon this vast Continent. The territory, comprising only about 35,000 square miles, having upwards of two millions population of the aborigines within the hinterlands, forms the base of operation for the missionary propoganda of the Church.

With the movements described above, Liberia finds herself struggling for the maintenance of her national integrity. It is a time of the most delicate diplomatic relations between the small Negro State and European Powers. By the very nature of the case the Church must assist in the building of the State; this is true from the peculiar inter-relationship of the two, hence the best possible results cannot be accomplished by any system that tends towards the segregation of this

field; no amount of special legislation by the General Conference looking towards the limitation of our Episcopacy can effect any permanent results whatever in the building of a Christian State and the thorough establishment of the Church upon the West Coast of Africa within the bounds of this Republic.

The problem of our African Field is a much larger one indeed than has been thought out by those who who espouse the cause of Episcopal limitations. It does not touch merely the adjustment of such conditions as are found in the southern section of the American Republic, where a small fraction of the race struggles for equal civil and political rights and Christian manhood, but it rather fixes a world-status for the black population of our world-wide Methodist Communion. The millions of Africa must share equally in any adjustment made by the Church respecting this black contingency. The largest and widest scope possible to human endeavor, is the only thing worthy of consideration by any great religious denomination purporting to uplift backward races; no circumscribed, limited and contracted legislation in the Church can contribute to the best possible results of our missionary operations in foreign lands, especially is this true as it relates to Methodism in Africa. God and human destiny are thrown into the balances over against man-made subterfuges and momentary expediences; The Church must rise to the demands of the times and prove herself of divine origin in the rightful solution of human problems.

Our African Field, from Liberia to Morocco and from the Equator to the East Coast must have such leadership in order to keep step with the march of world events, for the trend of civilization in the present century is manifestly towards the growth and development of world characters as leaders in both governments and religions. The supreme work of the ecclesiastical leader in Africa, under existing conditions, will be the interpretation of the divine purpose in the European occupa-

tion and domination of the Continent; he will be called upon to work out the destiny of these belated millions in the highest possible terms by means of the agencies now at work among this vast population. Liberia stands as the very base from which shall be played the great game of governmental evolution and religious propagandism.

It is an indistputable truth in the history of the Negro that the Methodist Episcopal Church has never attempted to go along the line of least resistance in the elevation of this race; on the other hand, it is also true that the Church has not measured up to her highest obligation an privilege with respect to our African Field. This field, as shown from the foregoing, has been almost in an autonomous condition, and stands as a fit example of the effects of segregation in Episcopal supervision. This accounts for the very meager results of our missionary endeavors, especially in Liberia, for the past four score years. It shows clearly what happens under a system of restricted episcopal supervision, and the non-interested attitude of our Methodism growing out of such a condition. Disconnected from the main body of the Church in itinerant general superintendency from the very founding of the mission until today, our Liberian field, although the oldest, has suffered as no other foreign mission of our great Church. Left to itself so long, there has never been any definite policy of organizing the forces for a great forward movement. If this field is to occupy any permanent place in the future economy of our foreign missionary propaganda, then the Church must put Africa, inclusive of Liberia, upon the same level with all the foreign fields, and let Methodism upon this Continent swing into line for the highest destiny of the darker races within this tropical belt.

Too long have the black peoples of the world, particularly in our African Field, been left to themselves; the heart of the Continent has not as yet been touched by the light of civilization; the possibilities of Methodism in

this land have not been tested for heathen redemption; we have only touched the mere fringes of the garment of heathenism. When will Methodism catch the real significance of its mission to the backward races? When will the black race be responsive to the clarion call that now comes from Ethiopia? When will the American Negro catch the real meaning of the tremendous racial issues throughout the world as they flash before our wondering gaze? We stand today in the midst of mighty world transformations, under the blaze and flashlights of Anglo-Saxon civilization transmitted across the continents. The allied forces of Methodism cannot be recreant to this heaven-born trust committed to us by the God of Nations.

The present era is the opportune time; the clock of God strikes the hour; the call is loud and clear; the mighty inspiring task has been committeed to Methodism; the vast and desolate deserts of heathenism must be made to "rejoice and blossom as the rose"; the multiplied agencies of the present century are the resultant forces of all the centuries past; the nations are moving upward and forward in the material development of the races of the world for human redemption. Into this great world-wide awakening God has called the darker race types; all races and nations and tribes and languages with their various tongues and dialects are now chanting a requiem over all slavery and oppression and moving like a mighty army that shakes the earth with its tread; the whole earth is rapidly being conquered in favor of those belated backward races; clans and classes, castes and prejudices must all vanish before the dominant forces of eternal righteousness; This is God's day, and the nations of the earth are marching to the music of Angelic Choristers whose heaven-born notes float across the centuries in the declaration: "On earth, peace and good will towards men." All hail!

THE BROTHERHOOD OF MANKIND.